

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Selectmen



Date: Monday, March 24, 2014
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Place: McCourt Social Hall Memorial Town Hall, Spencer, MA
Present: Chair Woodbury, Vice Chair Berthiaume, Members Fritze, Pepe and Administrator Gaudette. Clerk Stevens was absent.

At 6:04 p.m. Chairman Woodbury called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the Special Executive Session with the E. Brookfield Board of Selectmen of March 3, 2014 (Pepe/Fritze) passed 3/0. Mr. Berthiaume abstained. A motion to approve the minutes of the Executive Session of March 10, 2014 (Pepe/Fritze) passed 4/0.

Citizen Input

None

Communications

Announcement: Meritorious Service Award Nominations

Nominations are currently being accepted for the Meritorious Service Award.

Old Business

FY15 SEBRSD Budget Development Update – Superintendent Malvey

Members of Finance Committee were present with Superintendent Malvey and Business Manager Suprenant.

Superintendent Malvey said he has worked hard to straighten out the difficult financial situation that occurred in FY14 and submitted a level services budget for FY15 to the School Committee. The proposed increase of \$700,000 is 3% of the budget. Business Manager Julie Suprenant highlighted key areas impacting the budget and reviewed a summary of reductions allowing them to arrive at the FY15 budget. Key increases include \$202,000 to cover the anticipated loss of school choice and grants; \$207,000 for health insurance; \$31,316 for educational transportation and \$55,000 for special education transportation. The total increase is \$700,000 which amounts to a \$538,482 increase for Spencer, or 7%.

Dr. Malvey said he is thankful to the Department of Education for providing consultants to the District at their cost. He noted that teacher evaluation is ongoing and he's optimistic the District will be in a good position at the start of the next school year.

Mr. Pepe asked if there will be a reduction in this budget based on healthcare changes for retirees and active employees. Dr. Malvey said the School Committee will hold a public hearing to propose a change in insurance plans for retirees. Any changes to plans for active employees will be discussed during the collective bargaining process.

Ms. Suprenant said a part-time SPED teacher and a paraprofessional are the only open positions in this budget.

Mr. Berthiaume asked about the closing of Lake Street School. Dr. Malvey will review a report on this after the public hearing. Mr. Fritze asked if there is a plan to close Lake St. School this year. Dr. Malvey said if the decision is made, it will close by July 1st.

Mr. Fritze wants to ensure boilers are cleaned regularly at all schools to save on heating costs. Dr. Malvey said it will be done annually.

There was discussion on outdated technology across the District. Dr. Malvey reported there are currently \$632,000 worth of upgrades and equipment expenses needed. All computers are using the Microsoft XP operation system, which will no longer be supported by Microsoft as of April. Mr. Gaudette advised they borrow and seek a debt exclusion. This allows the amount to come off the tax rolls when the loan is paid in full. He noted that April 7th is the deadline to post questions for debt exclusions or overrides.

School Committee member Vinny Cloutier asked the Board to consider placing a combined ballot question on the Warrant for both the District and the Town. He believes this will put forth a united front. School Committee member Kevin Hayes said a stabilization account is needed to cover emergencies.

Administrator Gaudette noted if there is a shift in the amount of minimum local aid in favor of the School Budget, historically they have not reduced the budget by that amount. That is difficult for Town to accept; he recommends separate override questions.

Members of the Finance Committee were present. Bill Wall asked about the status of the \$120,000 set aside by the State in FY14. Dr. Malvey said he does not expect to use the entire amount; left over funds will be put towards other expenses. FinCom Chair Mary Braney asked if this budget will be sustainable over time, or if they'll be back again considering an override. Dr. Malvey is looking to make incremental growth each year to bring the District where it needs to be. He said this situation is likely to continue pointing out issues with outdated technology and expenses increasing each year, but said it's hard to know for certain. Nancy Tamse asked to see a copy of the five year curriculum plan. Chris Kandel believes the Town and the School should be united and have a combined override question.

Mr. Gaudette stated that 7% is not sustainable for the Town, which must abide by Proposition 2 ½. This type of increase is placing a burden on the Town.

Mr. Pepe asked if there are creative ways to bring in private funding. Dr. Malvey attended subcommittee meetings with Flexcon and Klems; both provided some funds, but the District was not able to match, or find it easy to meet their requirements.

New Business

Action Item: Intermunicipal Agreement with Leicester for Town Planner

Mr. Gaudette advised the Board to renew the IMA with the Town of Leicester for the Town Planner for FY15. The only change is a 1.3% increase which amounts to \$241.00 for the year.

A motion to approve the IMA with the Town of Leicester for the Town Planner for FY15 (Berthiaume/Pepe) passed 4/0.

Town Administrator Report

FY2015 Budget Development Update

Administrator Gaudette reported on the changes to the FY15 budget. The Board reviewed changes including the new fees for the Transfer Station. At this time there is a \$1,111,691 budget deficit. Projected revenue from tax levy, estimated cherry sheet and local receipts amounts to \$19,579,960, while appropriations amount to \$20,691,651.

Public Hearing: Municipal Services Review

Chairman Woodbury reconvened the public hearing at 8:32 pm.

Library Director Mary Baker-Wood provided an overview of the impact to the library if it were to operate at a minimum staffing level with three full-time librarians. Due to the size of building there is a need for three staff at all times; with vacations and time off, the library would be open less than the minimum amount of hours resulting in decertification and the loss of grants and other services. Mr. Berthiaume asked if a part-time person would be sufficient to cover vacations. Ms. Baker-Wood said at least two part-timers are needed for adequate coverage. Chairman Woodbury thanked her for her efforts in providing the additional information.

Action Item – Budget Advisory from the Board of Selectmen

Administrator Gaudette asked the Board for recommendations on budget reductions and override details. There was discussion on having one ballot question for the School District and another for Town Services.

Mr. Gaudette will make suggestions on recommended budget reductions, however he is not authorized to make decisions and asked the Board for guidance in determining what services to eliminate if the Override fails. The Board will submit their recommendations by Wednesday. Mr. Stevens submitted a list earlier in the week. He is away for the remainder of the week.

A special meeting will be held at 6:00 pm on March 31st for a final budget review and to finalize ballot questions.

Discussion: Draft Annual Town Meeting Warrant

The draft warrant was reviewed. Administrator Gaudette received a letter from the Finance Committee asking the Board to explore a local meals option tax. The Board will discuss at a future meeting.

Citizen input

Bob Cirba, 23 Summit St., commented that the Board has performed due diligence in terms of the budget process and does not want to see ballot questions combined for the District and the Town.

Board Member and Staff Comments

Mr. Pepe noted the Sugden Block Committee may have an RFP in place by April.

The meeting adjourned at 9:36 p.m. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Savoie
Administrative Assistant

Referenced Materials:

SEBRSD Budget Presentation
IMA with Leicester for Town Planner
Draft Annual Town Meeting Warrant